

T H E
C A U S E S
O F T H E
Dearness of Provisions assigned;
W I T H
EFFECTUAL METHODS
F O R
REDUCING the PRICES of them:

Humbly submitted to the CONSIDERATION of
PARLIAMENT.

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T H E
C A U S E S
O F T H E
Dearness of Provisions, &c.

THE distresses of the poor, occasioned by the dearness of provisions, are very great, and merit the attention of the legislature beyond all other subjects whatever.

THE industrious Poor, to the sweat of whose brows we are indebted for most of the conveniences and blessings we enjoy, have an indubitable right to our assistance.

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When

When these afflicted, miserable, and wretched people cannot, by their honest labour and assiduity, provide for the comfortable maintenance of themselves and helpless families, we are unjust and cruel to them, we must be divested of all humanity, of all concern for their happiness and welfare, if we embrace not every opportunity of contributing towards their relief.

There are other motives, which should most powerfully incline us to acts of beneficence and generosity in favour of those useful members of the community.

The wages of the working hand are always high or low, as the necessaries of life are dear or cheap; but the value of the manufactures of every country depends very much upon the price of labour: and that country will always carry on the greatest trade, whose manufactures, *ceteris paribus*, are the cheapest.

For these reasons, the labour of the industrious poor may be considered as the principal cause of our trade, by the means of which,

which, in the late war, we made vast acquisitions in every part of the globe, secured the liberties of Europe, and, by our subsidies, &c. enabled the King of Prussia to oppose and defeat the armies of two large and powerful empires.

SINCE then our greatness and power depend upon the industry, courage, and bravery of the lower class of people, it is both our interest and our duty to treat them with tenderness and humanity, and do every thing in our power to render their lives comfortable and happy.

BUT the hardships they suffer, on account of the extravagant prices of all sorts of provisions, are scarcely tolerable.

OUT of pity therefore to these valuable members of society, and to contribute to the public utility, I shall endeavour to point out the causes, and, at the same time, propose proper remedies for this national evil.

I. The unequal Division of our Farms is one of the chief causes of it.

THE wisest founders of antient commonwealths made an equal distribution of lands. This alone raised a nation, and gave strength to armies; it being equally the interest (and this was very great) of every individual to exert himself in defence of his country. When afterwards the lands became the property of a few, arts were introduced; and the generality, having no country, which they could call their own, reaped the fruits of their industry in all climes: they had very little to lose or to get.

AGIS and Cleomenes, observing that Sparta, which had 30,000 citizens in the time of Lycurgus, had not in their time more than 700, that scarce 100 of these were possessed of lands, and that all the rest were mere cowardly populace, revived the antient laws, and Lacædemon recovered its former state and became formidable. 'Twas the equal distribution of lands that enabled
Rome

Rome to soar above its humble condition ; and of this the Romans were sensible in their corrupted * state.

BUT our lands are as unequally divided as those of Sparta ever were. We have millions of people who are not possessed of a single acre ; and of the farmers and graziers, by far the greatest number enjoy only a most uncomfortable pittance, compared with those enormous engrossers, who occupy their hundreds and thousands, and are as errant monopolists as any exclusive company whatever.

IT is a common custom with them, by which they starve mankind in the midst of plenty, in autumn and the beginning of winter, to prey upon the little farmers. They buy up their small stock of corn, wheat especially, for their *seed wheat*, &c. pretending that they have not time to thresh their own, which they keep by them 'till those little growers have sold all their year's

* See The Causes of the Grandeur and Declension of the Romans, and Plutarch's Life of Cleomenes.

produce; then the great farmers advance the prices of grain to a degree of incredibility. Thus the Poor are distressed; nor is it to be wondered that they murmur, collect themselves into bodies, and, by committing riots and other acts of enormity, throw the state into a convulsion.

THESE great farms also diminish the number of people, and are an irreparable hindrance to population.

A farm of 2000 acres, occupied by one great farmer, might very well be divided into eight or ten farms*: and three of these farms, managed to the best advantage, would employ as many people as the whole, in the possession and under the direction of one over-grown tenant.

INSTEAD of a lordly master and mistress, here would be eight or ten honest, decent

* The rich landlord, no doubt, will object to the number of farm-houses he must build in this case: but I apprehend the advanced rent these small farms might be let at, would be more than equivalent for his additional expences.

men,

men, with their good wives, to superintend as many farms. And as they would live more according to the rules of temperance and sobriety, each head of these respectable families would probably have a more numerous issue than the great occupier.

AND as the number of servants and day-labourers would be much increased, population also would be promoted and multiplied in the same proportion.

How amazingly would a more equal division of farms * increase the business and
number

* A gentleman who has written on this subject in the *London Chronicle* of Thursday, October 16, and signed himself *Pro Patria*, says, "If the good of the community is to be considered, I must beg leave to say, that monopolised farms are absolutely destructive of it: and I am convinced of their pernicious tendency to advance the price of all kinds of provisions; to ruin the trade and manufactures of this kingdom; to depopulate the country, and leave the people a prey to the artful schemes of engrossers and monopolisers. The greatest part of the people have long experienced the most grievous hardships from the extravagant price of the necessaries of life; and it is by reducing accumulated farms only they can expect relief. The taxes of the state are very burthensome to the manufacturers, &c. and they cannot

number of the various artificers, such as carpenters, plow-wrights, wheel-wrights, black-smiths,

cannot bear the heavy load the avaricious rich farmers have lately laid on them, without sinking under it: our export trade decays daily, and other nations are now taking advantage of our distress and misconduct; and trade once lost, rarely returns to its former channel. What a deplorable loss would this be! all degrees of people would be affected by it! its direful consequences may be easier conceived than expressed. The advantages we should reap from dividing an over-grown farm of 1000l. per annum into ten separate farms, appear to be very great, from these unvarnished facts:---Here would consequently be established nine new families, and we might expect nine additional dairies, whose produce would be an additional supply of butter, cheese, eggs, poultry, bacon, beef, veal, &c. for our markets; these families would afford employment to five times more people (at a very low computation) than one that occupies a farm of 1000l. per annum employed in agriculture only. There would be wanting husbandmen and boys, dairy women, and women for domestic employment; nine additional sets of household furniture, nine sets of implements for agriculture, gardening, &c. and their constant repairs. There would be business for an additional number of clothiers, tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, wheelwrights, and other manufacturers and handicraftsmen; besides employment for labourers who hire themselves occasionally as they are wanted by different masters; and as these men are independent, and live in cottages, they generally marry, and with industry and exact economy, bring up an useful, hardy race of people, for the service of the public; whereas large farmers generally keep servants in their own houses (to do all their work except getting in their harvest) whose situation obliges them

smiths, collar-makers, &c. necessarily employed by the farmer in carrying on his trade.

At the request of a very intelligent and curious gentleman, who has taken great pains to inform himself upon these interesting subjects, for the benefit of the neighbourhood

them to live in celibacy, to the great disadvantage of the state. All farmers now-a-days are convinced, that it is for their own advantage to manure their ground well; and will not starve their land, if manure can be conveniently got; besides, these separate farms will produce in proportion much more compost than a large one. Large farms, like the capital prizes in a lottery, fall to the share of a very few, disappointing the expectations of a great number of adventurers; therefore dividing them would increase the chances for happy settlements: and if, after a series of years employed in labour and diligence, these people should obtain something comfortably to support an infirm old age, I should not think this a just or reasonable objection to this scheme. And if prosperity attends them, they, as well as great farmers, will keep some ricks of corn by them to sell occasionally, and prevent a natural scarcity; and we should be pretty secure against artificial ones: for as we do not live by bread alone, greater plenty of other provisions would be produced and regularly carried to market; and it would be out of the power of a few to combine together to advance the prices, and distress the public."

Another gentleman, who signs himself *Cato Priscus*, in the same *Chronicle* of Saturday October 18, has also illustrated this part of the argument with great clearness.

in

in which he lives, I examined the register of a large parish, in a county remarkable for its improvements in agriculture, in order to find out how the throwing many small farms into great ones affected the number of people. Before I looked into the register, I told him I was persuaded, though it might seem a paradox to him, that there was a considerable decrease in the births and burials. He dissented from me in opinion.

THE commencement of the improvements to which I allude, took place about the year 1690.

To have as clear a view as possible of the case in question, we examined the register of the births and burials, for three equal number of years, at three different points of time. The result of our inquiry is here laid down with exactness and fidelity.

<i>Ann.</i>	<i>Births.</i>	<i>Burials.</i>
1672	45	30
1673	24	30
1674	28	24
1675	33	65
1676	34	17
1677	24	21
1678	31	27
	<hr/> 221	<hr/> 214

1700	26	15
1701	18	12
1702	24	24
1703	26	18
1704	21	24
1705	21	30
1706	33	23
	<hr/> 169	<hr/> 146
	<hr/> 52	<hr/> 68

1750	32	23
1751	14	14
1752	22	9
1753	24	18
1754	26	18
1755	15	22
1756	26	13
	<hr/> 152	<hr/> 117
	<hr/> 62	<hr/> 97

THE

THE decrease of births in seven years, even in the infancy of these improvements, in one parish was 52: and in the same number of years, at the distance of little more than half a century, it was 62.

IF the decrease, occasioned by the uniting of so many farms, was so considerable in one parish, the candid reader will easily judge of the fatal consequences of this wrong and mischievous practice to the public.

HERE the great farmers will cry out, *This gentleman is an enemy to improvements.* To which I reply, *Quite the reverse.* Few persons in the kingdom have taken more pains to promote them.

BUT improvements in agriculture will be more effectually carried on under the direction of an honest industrious farmer, who occupies any number of acres under 250, than under the great monopolist, who rents a thousand or two, or under the superintendency of an over-grown engrosser, who hires some thousands of acres, cultivates what he chuses of them,

them, and letts the rest, at an advanced and exorbitant rent, in small parcels, to an incredible number of poor people; who can hardly live and bring up their families, though they work harder than any day-labourer.

THE great farmers, who have too much upon their hands for one man to conduct with ease and propriety, hurry on their business, and consequently commit a great waste; and yet cannot compass their affairs in such a manner as to give their ground proper culture, and to sow or reap in due season.

WHEAT never receives any injury, unless it be in very wet lands, after it has taken root*. It defies all weathers, 'till in blossom, when the *farina fecundans*, or male dust, is subject to be beaten off by rains.

THE heavy rains which continued so long in the months of May and June, were the

* When wheat is not sown time enough to strike root before the frosts come on, it will infallibly be nipped, and sometimes entirely destroyed by the severity of the season.

probable

probable causes of the extraordinary and general failure of our wheat crops this year. This conjecture is confirmed by a common observation, that in a dry summer, though the stems be not so rank, yet the ear is always fullest, and the crops the best.

BUT the great farmers, in general, finish their harvest too late to admit of their sowing wheat in good time. It may also be observed, that wheat sown late, though it escapes the inclemency of the frosts, suffers much more than the early-sown from crows and other vermin.

THE monopoly of farms produces not only a scarcity of corn, but of most other provisions, as butter, cheese, eggs, poultry, pigs, &c. &c. not to mention several other necessaries, depending on the breed of cattle, viz. candles, soap, leather, &c. There is one person in the eastern part of this kingdom, who, I am assured, now rents no less than seven different farms. The former industrious occupiers used to supply a large neighbouring market town with a very considerable

siderable quantity of the above-mentioned provisions: the present magnificent lord, like most if not all his brother monopolists, supplies his own table with them, but contributes not one chicken to the table of the public. Many similar instances might be produced; and hence, in a great measure, the extravagant prices of these necessary commodities arise.

It would be easy to exhibit a view of many other inconveniencies that are the natural consequences of this evil. But as I have the honour to know several persons of rank, who are convinced of the unhappy effects of this mistake in themselves and the other proprietors of our lands, I doubt not but the wisdom of the nation will speedily and effectually put a stop to this grievance.

THERE are various other reasons from which it appears, that to lessen the size and multiply the number of farms will be of the greatest utility to the public, and of very considerable advantage to the land-owners.

B

SMALL

SMALL farms are better and more advantageously managed than great one's. It is not to be supposed that a man, who occupies 500 acres, can inspect and manage every part as well as a person who has not 100. Larger extent of lands will ever be subject to greater trespasses, damages, and waste. Large quantities cannot be manured as well as smaller. The product consequently must be proportionably less.

SMALL farms are always lett considerably higher, by the acre, than large one's. The great farmers who hire hundreds, I might have said thousands, of acres, have them from 4s. to 10s. per acre, though little growers give from 12s. to 20s.; so that upon the whole it will be the owner's interest to divide the farm in the manner here proposed, as his rent will be advanced, the public benefitted, and his tenants, provided they live according to their rent, will have a competent livelihood.

HERE

HERE it may be objected, that the expence of building farm-houses, barns, and stables, will render this scheme impracticable, because the interest of the money and repairs will amount to more than the advanced rent. But it is easy to demonstrate the contrary.

LET us suppose a farm of 1000 acres to be divided into ten, viz. Two of 200 acres each, four of 100, and four of 50.

The rent of the 1000 acres, when lett to one great farmer at 8s. per acre, amounted annually to - - - £. 400 0 0

Deduct the interest of 600l. at 4 per cent. being the money laid out in erecting the different buildings, and 20l. a year allowed for repairs - - 44 0 0

£. 356 0 0

The 1000 acres, divided, will lett at 12s. per acre £. 600 0 0

B 2

Part

Part of the great house, barns, &c.
will be sufficient for one of the
best farms. The house, &c.
for the other, will cost 400 0 0

Those of the 4 farms
of 100 acres each,
will cost 800 0 0

Those of the four of 50
each will cost 500 0 0

The annual interest of 1700 0 0 will a-
mount to 68 0 0
Yearly repairs 52 0 0

Subtract 120 0 0 for outgoings out of
600l. and it will appear that the landlord
gets 124l. a year by dividing one farm of
1000 acres into ten, besides the exquisite
pleasure and satisfaction that must inevitably
arise from the consideration of his contri-
buting so eminently to the happiness of
such a number of industrious families, to
say nothing of the equal service he does
to the public.

As

As therefore the distresses of the poor are very great; as the nation in general is discontented on account of the exorbitant prices of provisions, occasioned principally by the great farms, the legislature, it is to be hoped, will immediately enact some laws for the removal of these grievances: in doing which I am persuaded, from their moderation and good sense, they will avoid every violent measure. Something, however, that will operate immediately, must be done. All private articles, relating to lands or farms hired by farmers or graziers, who occupied more than 200 acres, should, by all means, be null and void at Michaelmas next: and all leases should absolutely terminate and cease at Michaelmas 1768.

An ingenious gentleman proposes, that every tenant, hiring more than 200 acres after that time, should pay a tax of two shillings per acre, to be gathered by the assessors of the land-tax. He adds, " In
 " this there can be no impropriety; for
 " who more able? Do not many of the

“ great farmers ride in their coaches. Do
 “ not their wives dress as richly, (though
 “ they make an awkward appearance) as the
 “ ladies and daughters of their landlords?
 “ They could not justly complain of such a
 “ measure as a burden, since many of them,
 “ who have farmed only 150l. a year, have
 “ purchased, in a few years, estates of a
 “ much greater value.”

BUT I think this expedient would labour under inseparable difficulties. Would not the great farmers make the consumers repay the 2s. per acre over and over? Nothing, in my humble opinion, will effectually lower the prices of provisions: nor will that measure alone do it. There must be many other regulations.

II. *The next, I might have said the first, great Cause of the excessive Dearness of Provisions, is the Bounty upon Exported Corn.*

THE granting a bounty in the latter end of the last century, when farming was but
 ill

ill understood, might, like many other præmiums, have its good use. It was probably a means of exciting the farmer's industry to try experiments and make improvements in agriculture, and to grow greater quantities of corn.

BUT now the farmer's business is well understood, and the corn trade is established, the bounty should cease, or at least never be allowed, when wheat is above thirty-two and barley above sixteen per quarter; for those kinds of grain are really dear commodities when sold at or above those prices

WHEN children first begin to stand and attempt to walk, 'tis very necessary to give them the assistance of leading-strings; but not to take away that assistance at a proper time, as they grow up and can go alone, would be ridiculous, and attended with inconveniencies: and it is as ridiculous and absurd to continue the bounty upon exported corn, now we grow immense quantities of every kind, and can afford to vend it cheaper than any other nation whatever. It is not

only an absurdity to act in this manner, but it is of the most fatal consequence to us as a trading nation.

By draining the kingdom of this most essential production of the earth, the price of corn is greatly enhanced to our own people, and rendered much cheaper to foreigners. And if foreigners are furnished, by the means of a bounty, with bread, and a variety of liquors, upon cheaper terms than we are, the price of labour amongst them will be proportionably diminished, and their manufactures fabricated cheaper than ours in that proportion. They will certainly be enabled to undersell us, and ruin our trade.

WHEN by these means the prices of the necessaries of life are become extravagantly dear, and our poor manufacturers want work, they must either content themselves with rags and the want of common necessaries, or migrate into foreign countries, to the entire destruction of their own.

THAT

THAT this is already the case, in some measure, our great manufacturing towns assure us with concern. And that many English families of small fortunes or annuities, retire to France, and other countries, because they can live cheaper there than at home, daily experience testifies.

THESE accounts are disagreeable and melancholy. May they prove a timely warning to the government! Patriots, I hope, will exert themselves, and put a stop to these spreading evils.

FOREIGNERS read with astonishment, in histories, of our trade and commerce, and can scarcely be persuaded to believe that we grant a bounty upon exported corn. *When we see a government, says the celebrated Rousseau, pay duties, instead of receiving them, for the exportation of corn in plentiful years, and likewise for its importation in years of scarcity, it is necessary to be an eye-witness to such facts to give credit to them: and we should regard them as lies, if related of antient times.*

IN

IN former reigns, proclamations have been issued to empower commissioners to purchase corn for public magazines, when wheat fell below sixteen shillings a coomb, rye below nine, and barley below eight. There are several countries in Europe that have granaries erected for the same purpose. The granaries established at Geneva, became a public resource in bad years. We read in the front of the edifice this just and beautiful inscription—*Alit & ditat.*

IF, at the same time, the subjects have a free power to send their corn to what market they please, whether at home or abroad, these public storehouses will infallibly have their use. But to give a bounty to raise the price of corn to our own people, and to make it cheaper to those of other countries, is peculiar to the English system of laws and policy, and is, even of these laws, the most extraordinary.

Is there a country in the world, besides Great-Britain, that taxes every kind of grain? But a bounty upon exported corn is the worst

worst kind of tax. It makes bread, which, by a sublimity of expression, is called *The Staff of Life*, a dear and scarce commodity to our own people, and a cheap and plentiful one to foreigners.

IF this island was a province to some more powerful kingdom, the conqueror could not impose a severer law upon us. The language of his edict would be to this purpose.—*Till and sow your ground. Reap and thresh your corn in safety. We only desire to eat bread made of this corn, and to drink the liquors extracted from it, upon cheaper terms than you do. These, and these only, are the fruits which we expect from our conquest.* Such an edict may appear, at first sight, very mild and gentle, but must end in the destruction of the conquered country.

IT may be objected by those, who have not accustomed themselves to think upon these subjects, *There would be a glut of corn which could never be exported, if the bounty was taken off.* To which I answer,----The cheaper, the more sure of a market abroad ;
and

and the more sure the market, the greater the farmer's encouragement to cultivate his lands. But as corn would be considerably cheaper, the price of labour would be greatly reduced; by which means the farmers would carry on their improvements upon easier terms, and with greater spirit, and consequently grow greater quantities of the different sorts of grain. But if we should grow greater quantities of corn, our quantity of exported corn would be proportionably greater: for the quantity of every manufacture that is exported, will be greater or less in proportion to the plenty or scarceness of that commodity.

As therefore the quantity of exported corn will be much more considerable upon taking off the bounty, I hope our superiors will immediately take off that tax, of all others the most prejudicial to the true interest of trade and our country.

THE bounty of five shillings a quarter upon wheat, and two shillings and six-pence upon barley, &c. together with the store-room

room money, amounts annually, upon an average, to 250,000*l.* * a very considerable sum ! and well worth saving to a nation that is 140 millions in debt.

THIS money, however, the government is obliged to pay, let what will become of the corn, whether it be sold to our rivals in trade, lost at sea, or sent a few leagues to sea, and then privately landed in one of our own ports : and some merchants, by corrupting the Custom-house officers, have received the bounty for 1000 quarters where only 800 have been exported. I could instance two recent facts of this kind. The frauds were detected, and the greedy avaricious merchant reimbursed the government.

* I have been told they amount to twice this sum, and have heard the argument against the bounty thus farther urged, " The sum received for exported corn, *communibus annis*, amounts to two millions sterling, the bounty to " a quarter of a million, *i. e.* considering the affair in a mercantile view, we pay an interest of 2*½*l. per cent. on our " return. No trade, at least no European trade, can support this. The sums in this calculation may, probably, " be mistaken ; but the reasoning seems clear and good."

THIS

THIS very man, I am informed, is now with great activity and address soliciting the corn-merchants of London, and several other seaports, to prefer petitions in favour of the continuance of the bounty. Is it to be wondered that men of this stamp should grasp at these advantages, granted to them by the bounty and munificence of parliament, though it should in the end ruin our trade, and reduce us to a state of bankruptcy?

BUT let not the merchants in this branch of trade, be offended with this observation, or think that it is levelled at the majority of them. Far from it! They are, in general, gentlemen of very respectable characters, who act upon the noblest principles. Of that number is my worthy and much honoured friend Philanthropos, who, out of compassion to the poor of his neighbourhood, never buys wheat for exportation, when it is sold above 32s. per quarter. And when above 40s. he imports it without any pecuniary advantage to himself, for their benefits. Go all ye gentlemen of the same situation
in

in life, and do likewise. If you do not amass your thousands quite so soon, by following the example of this humane and most worthy man, you will by such good offices acquire, what is of infinitely greater consequence, a good name, great peace and complacency of mind, and an interest in that kingdom where the happiness is pure, and uninterrupted, and infinitely beyond the conception of mortals.

III. The Scarcity of Live Cattle is also the Occasion of the high Prices of Provisions.

LEAN cattle, and consequently meat of every sort, sell now as dear again as they did twenty-five years ago. This scarcity of cattle and dearth of provisions is owing, partly to the distemper that raged a few years since among the cattle, and very much to our eating more animal food than either we or our ancestors formerly did. The acts of parliament also, which prohibit the importation of cattle from Ireland, and other breeding countries, where lands are cheaper, and the inhabitants can of course bring up
lean.

lean cattle upon more moderate terms than a people, whose lands are let dearer, possibly can do, contribute largely to increase this scarcity.

THIS deficiency in the number of our cattle may easily be supplied by repealing the acts of parliament alluded to above, and by passing another obliging all persons whatever for two or three years, to bring up all their cow calves, ewe lambs, and sow pigs, and by opening the ports, and granting a bounty for the Importation of lean cattle from all parts of the world.

THE iniquitous trades of jobbing, fore-stalling, &c. should be entirely prevented. All farmers, graziers, &c. should be obliged to send their corn, cattle, butter, cheese, eggs, &c. to be exposed to sale at the nearest market town.

As matters are now ordered we have hardly any markets in our country towns. Country shopkeepers and hucksters buy all
little,

little, though necessary articles, such as butter, cheese, eggs, &c. of the farmers and dairy-women, and sell them again at an advanced price.

CORN, indeed, is generally sold by sample only to merchants and millers; so that the common tradesman, labourer, and mechanic have no opportunity of buying a little wheat, and having it ground and made into bread at the cheapest rate.

A Proclamation has just now been issued to prevent the selling by sample, &c. but, sorry I am to say it, never was an order of government more shamefully disregarded!

HIS Majesty, however, in Council, by laying an embargo upon ships, to prevent the exportation of wheat, extended the prerogative to the noblest purpose imaginable. The most essential necessary of life is, by this means, to be purchased; though still at an extravagant price. And if the great farmers would thresh out their wheat, the

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good

good end proposed by our gracious Sovereign would be effectually secured.

BUT these people thwart all the designs of government, as far as it is in their power, whenever they apprehend it their interest so to do.

SHIPS carrying barley were not included in the royal edict. The demand therefore for that species of grain is uncommon, and the price of it enormous. It is now vended at a higher rate than wheat was sold for in former years.

IN the counties where bread is in general made of wheat, this grievance is not very sensibly felt; but in those parts of the kingdom, where the common people live upon barley and oat bread, their groans and cries merit pity, and call aloud for the aids of government.

THE poor inhabitants of more than twenty counties in England and Wales, (to say nothing

thing of our countrymen beyond the Tweed) live chiefly, at this time, upon barley and oat bread. Heaven grant that this truth may be conveyed, by some personage of power and weight, to the best of Kings and his Privy Council !

As barley and oats, tho' a much coarser and less nourishing food, are the only grain of which the bread of these industrious, though distressed and miserable people, is made, and are, in effect, their wheat; I cannot entertain any doubt but the indulgence of our common father will be extended to them, as it has been to those of their rank in the richer parts of this kingdom. Their necessities require and claim redress and relief.

THE farmers, indeed, are not the only men who exert themselves in order to enhance the price of oats and barley: the cornfactors and distillers contribute their share. The former * look out for markets
C 2 abroad

* The most notable of these gentlemen, I am informed, have exported, and are daily shipping off, immense quantities
of

abroad to quicken the sale of them, or buy and lay them up in granaries to sell them again, at an advanced price, to our own people, or foreigners, just as the demands best answer their extravagant expectations. The latter amass together all the barley they can to convert it into spirits, by the immoderate use of which an incredible number of people are burnt up alive. It is apprehended that some of these gentlemen will have greater quantities of barley by them in a month or five weeks, than they can possibly use, in the common course of their trade, in ten or twelve months. They are also contriving all the ways and means imaginable, that they may have the liberty of working their stills continued to them. They intend to petition Parliament upon the occasion. They employ hackney writers to publish futile paragraphs in the papers, under the specious pretence of shewing the great necessity of the continuance of this power, and the mighty advantage that the nation must derive

of barley to Holland, where it is to be lodged 'till our ports are open, when they intend bringing it home again, though they have and will receive the bounty for exporting it.

from

from it; whereas, in reality, they have no design, but to enrich themselves, though at the expence of the health and lives of many thousands of their countrymen. But if any regard is paid to the petitions of these gentlemen, the nation in general will be greatly distressed, and many of the labouring poor starved.

THE farmers, cornfactors, and distillers give out, that the last crop of barley was uncommonly great; so that if the exportation of it is prevented, and the extraction of spirits from it is prohibited, a very inconsiderable part of it can be consumed by our own people.

BUT this suggestion is unjust, not to say without foundation. All persons, who understand these matters, know that the artificial grass-seeds laid such hold, through the wetness of the season, that the grasses in general very much hindered the growth of the barley. And it is clear to every common observer, that the present high price of barley must be the effect of a real or artificial

scarcity. In either case, it is the hope and belief of every native of this island, who is not divested of all humanity, that the Legislature will immediately interpose, and give timely aid to the public by the removal of this sore and alarming evil.

Among other trifling objections to a prohibition, they urge, that the great quantity of molasses used by the distillers will raise the price of sugar. Be it so. Is it not more desirable to have sugar, a foreign commodity, and an unnecessary species of luxury, dear, than to starve half our deserving poor, by suffering the corn to be converted to an improper use, which would otherwise furnish them with bread?

It is clear to a demonstration, that the quantity of barley and oats in the kingdom is not more than our own inhabitants will consume in less than a twelve-month. And should Providence once more punish this guilty land with a bad harvest, or a thin crop, what a dreadful consequence, from the unlimited

unlimited power of exporting and distilling those grains !

BUT granting that the next harvest may prove a plentiful one, and the weather fine, which is more than any mortal can presume to foretell, with any degree of certainty, is it not evident to a demonstration, as there is a very great demand for corn in several countries upon the continent, that the high prices, which they are ready to give, will invite our merchants and corn-growers to export, and the distillers to distil, 'till their rapaciousness has once more produced a real and deplorable scarcity, not to say a famine?

I hope it will never be in the power of any persons whatever to upbraid the present illustrious Ministry with the odium of which such a calamity must necessarily be productive. From the present Administration, composed of personages of distinguished abilities, we have the highest expectations : and if they take away, for one year, the power of exporting and distilling every kind
of

of grain, they will receive the praises and best wishes of all the people of Great-Britain, unless I except a few of the merchants, the distillers, and two or three thousand rich farmers, most of whom have contributed to the great distress of our fellow-subjects, who, now bread and all the other necessaries of life are so extravagantly dear, are frequently unable to satisfy the cravings of nature.

It is the greatest jest and imposition for these over-grown farmers to plead poverty, and make a clamour about the cheapness of grain, for which they are, at this time, offered an amazing price, *viz.* from 44 to 50s. for wheat, and from 24 to 30s. a quarter for barley. Besides, it is well known, that some of them keep their coaches, have their side-boards of plate, post-chaises, and drink wine and punch instead of malt liquor. I do not grudge them these great advantages from their farms; but I honestly, and with great sincerity, wish, that, while they abound in the luxuries, the industrious and useful Poor may not want the necessaries of life.

By

By prohibiting the exportation of every kind of grain, and putting an entire stop to the distillery, much will be done towards reducing the prices of corn. To do this still more effectually, it is highly expedient, and even necessary, to open our ports for the importation of wheat, barley, and oats, from all parts of the world. But to render all the necessaries of life cheap for a continuance, to restore lasting tranquility, plenty, power, and happiness to this kingdom, a great deal more must be effected; the ports should for ever be free and open for the importation of corn from all countries; our farms should be more equally divided, the bounty upon exported corn should be taken off, &c.

THE wisdom and authority of government can alone effect this, and remove the causes of scarcity, which are laid down in these papers. There is however another, which comes not within the reach of our laws, which perhaps is as pernicious as any. It proceeds entirely from our own luxury and daintiness.

THEY

THEY who are best acquainted with the baking business tell us, that twenty or thirty years ago two quarters of wheat would, upon the most moderate calculation, go as far as three quarters will now. The reason is plainly this: At that time few, if any, except people of the first fashion, constantly eat bread made of fine flour. The generality were contented with the meal as it came from the mill (which, by the way, makes by far the sweetest and most wholesome bread); and the poor fed with comfort and satisfaction on much coarser fare. They were, however, full as strong, healthy, and vigorous *then*, as they are *now*. Yet, who eat the coarsest part of our meal at present? Very few, if any, of those in the middle station of life; and no small number, even amongst the poorest sort, especially among the poor of our cities, dislike and reject it. Instances might be produced to confirm this assertion; but they would be invidious, and indeed, I fear, to the generality of people, unnecessary. White bread only, and that made of the finest flour bolted, sifted, &c. to an almost impalpable powder, is admitted
at

at the tables of the *rich*. Many of the *poor* vie with them in this article of luxury. I speak of both ranks in general. There are, doubtless, many exceptions. The consequence of which affected daintiness is, that one third at least of our ground corn becomes the portion of poultry, hogs, and horses. The same, or however a similar and melancholy truth will hold good concerning other provisions. Thus we *consume* in *eight* months, what might well suffice us twelve; and then wonder and murmur at a scarcity; which we owe, in some measure, to our own wasteful prodigality.

LET us now proceed to those evils, which it is in the power of good and wise laws to remove.

THE laws, relating to millers, are so vague and obsolete, that these men distress the poor, and bid defiance to justice. They get, by every last of corn they cut, between five and six pounds a last: an amazing instance of oppression, which loudly calls for redress!

WHEAT

WHEAT of the growth of 1765, upon an average, weighed from 17 to 19 stone a comb. 21 stone multiplied by 18 the medium is equal to 378 stone; deduct 21 stone for bran and waste, there remain 357. The millers sold their different sorts of flour at 19d. 20d. and 21d. a stone. 357 stone at 1s. 8d. the medium is equal to 29l. 15s. But the highest price of wheat in 1765 was 24l. Subtract that sum from 29l. 15s. and there remains 5l. 15s. the miller's profit, to say nothing of the bran.

INDEED no article more requires the attention of government than this. It is a known fact, that if a poor man carries a bushel of wheat to a miller (I mean one of any substance) to be ground, the constant answer is,—‘ I cannot grind it *now*; you ‘ must stay ’till I am at leisure, (*i. e.* perhaps lose a whole day's work) or call for ‘ it again.’—By which time he will most probably have so far adulterated, or diminished the commodity, that the poor creature will be forced, after repeated trials, to purchase meal and flour of the miller, or of those
who

who buy of millers; which is the very end such people aim at. This circumstance will, in some measure, account for the general resentment, which the populace in all corn-riots shew against *millers*, even against those who are known *not* to grind for exportation.

MILLERS, some years ago, were in general as poor as day-labourers; but now by their oppressive and unjust gains they set up for gentlemen, keep hunters, chariots, &c. and affect grandeur and elegance. Though it be the duty and interest of all communities to give due and proper encouragements to all necessary and useful trades, care must be taken to prevent their growing rich by dishonesty, and even by unreasonable profits. This grievance however, occasioned by the unjustifiable conduct of the millers, may easily be removed. The power of parliament may do it by taking from millers, who literally *grind the faces of the poor*, the liberty of selling meal and flour; and by obliging them to take in money what parliament judges equitable for grinding corn. This would put it out of their power to refuse grinding, even for the
poor

poor; whose corn, as they could not sell it, they would neither adulterate nor steal, at least to any great degree.

IV. But the Taxes laid upon the Poor are heavier, and of a more oppressive Nature than those laid upon most other Denominations of People of better Circumstances and higher Rank.

THE housekeeper who brews his own beer pays no duty for the malt liquor which he drinks at home, but what is laid upon malt; but the poor pay that with several additional and heavy one's laid upon all the malt liquors, which are sold at public houses. By this means all opulent persons, who brew their own malt liquor, drink their ale and common beer as cheap again as the labouring poor, who have not conveniences for brewing.

It is a great pity that the necessaries of life should be taxed at all. Was the duty taken off corn, salt, soap, and candles, and laid upon articles of luxury, as labour and manu-

manufactures would be much cheaper, trade and commerce would flourish of course.

I remember to have read, in some of the papers, not more than three or four months since, that the money arising from the duty upon salt, did not more than pay the salaries of the officers who collect that duty. If that report be true, the duty should, by all means, be taken off, that those officers, who are now an unnecessary tax upon *the public*, might be employed, so as to be of some service to that public to which they have hitherto been a burden.

BUT there is a more powerful reason for taking off this preposterous duty.

THE saline particles of every species of manure are the principal causes of vegetation. Salt therefore, were the duty taken off, as it is the best, would be by much the cheapest, manure, that has hitherto been discovered.

By

By sowing 100 weight of it upon an acre a good crop of corn or turnips would be produced. The charge of which quantity, in an inland country, is now about 10s.; whereas the charge of ten cart loads of dung, including the loading, carriage, and spreading, is 20s. But if the duty was taken off, two bushels or 100 weight of salt would not cost more than 3s. Therefore, the advantages arising from the repeal of the acts enjoining the payment of the salt duty, would be very great to the poor, to the farmer, and indeed to the nation in general.

To the farmer it would lessen the expence of cultivation, and the value of lands very considerably; and as he would thereby be enabled to cultivate and sow a greater number acres than he did before, he might afford to pay a greater rent; and, at the same time, sell his corn the cheaper

THE benefit arising from the abolition of this duty would be very considerable to all farmers, but more especially so to the
growers,

growers, who inhabit those counties that are hilly and mountainous, where the carriage of dung and other heavy composts is difficult, not to say impracticable.

AGRICULTURE should, above all other arts, receive every natural and proper encouragement that can be given to it. But nothing can expedite the business of the farmer, and promote improvements in agriculture, more than a rich manure, that can be conveyed either on horseback or in light carriages, and at an easy expence, to the lands to be prepared for the reception of grain, more especially those lands that are almost inaccessible. It is owing to a deficiency in this respect that some millions of acres are uncultivated in this powerful kingdom, that bread corn is dearer, that the poor are without employ, and of course more miserable and wretched in those rugged and uneven wilds than in level and campaign countries, where farming is carried on with more ease, and consequently with greater advantage and spirit.

D

THIS

THIS manure would be of considerable service also to large portions of land in Cheshire and other counties where improvements have been made by the means of marle, and yet where the crops, in many places, are less than they were a few years ago; the reason of which is this:---the spirit and efficacy of marle will last about twenty years; but not much longer. It now begins to wear out in many parts; and no land will bear a second coat of this manure as well as it did the first. No good prospect this for several farms, unless some other cheap substitute can be discovered.

WHAT I have advanced with regard to salt, as a manure, is founded upon my own experience, as well as the repeated trials of a most ingenious and worthy gentleman, who has long honoured me with his friendship and sentiments upon these interesting subjects.

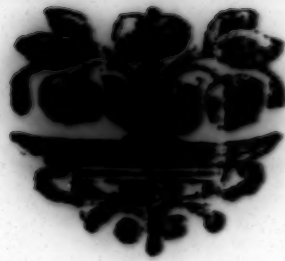
THERE are many evils of a very terrible nature to be dreaded from the dearth, not to say the want, of provisions, concerning
which

which we have so many loud, though just, complaints. Hunger, we know, will break through stone walls ; and if the Poor are oppressed with it much longer, it is greatly to be feared that they will assemble in a riotous manner, more generally than they have done hitherto, and fill the land with ravage and devastation. May Heaven inspire our governors to prevent all commotions, all desolation of this kind !

“ UNLESS the Legislature,” as an ingenious correspondent expresses himself, “ can
“ think of some method of employing
“ the parochial poor, by which the rates
“ may be lessened, I fear great numbers of
“ our low farmers, from 10 to 20l. per
“ annum, who barely raise a sufficiency of
“ corn for their own consumption, must be
“ inevitably ruined.”

THE grievances of the poor must ultimately fall upon the landed interest. The poor's rate for the year 1764 amounted to more than 2,200,000l. ; an amazing sum !

considerably greater than what used to defray
the exigencies of government, not more than
seventy or eighty years since.



A P P E N D I X.

IF it should not be thought proper to oblige all landlords to divide their farms, because many of them might find it difficult to raise money for erecting farm-houses, &c. yet it would, without doubt, be highly expedient, and even absolutely necessary, to dissolve all private articles and leases, so far as to leave it to the landlord whether to adopt this new mode or not. By these means a great number of nobility and gentlemen of large property, who, to my knowledge, highly approve of this scheme, would immediately set about this national undertaking; which would encrease their incomes, add amazingly to the emolument of the state, supply all ranks of people with the necessaries of life upon moderate terms, and, at the same time, sufficiently encourage and enable an incredible number of industrious
and

and worthy farmers to cultivate their lands and bring up their families. And those noble personages and gentry, who might not, in all respects, approve of this scheme, would have a proper check upon their tenants, who now lord it with a high hand over the poor, and are astonishingly insolent to the very owners of their farms.

WHEN the landlord has a legal power of telling a great farmer, *I give you notice to quit my farm at Michaelmas twelve-month, if you do not every week, from this time, send such a quantity of wheat, &c. (in proportion to the produce) to market*, there would be an end of hoarding and withholding corn, against which the Scriptures speak so emphatically. We shall constantly have our markets full, and the necessaries of life cheap. Nothing but such a measure will oblige this rich and opulent body of people to pay a due regard to the laws of humanity, of which many of them seem to have but very imperfect apprehensions: and yet some, though very few, of them are very amiable persons. My friend Philo-
gathos,

gathos, always furnishes the poor of his parish with wheat at 30s. a quarter, even when the general price is 3l.

IN Cheshire, Lancashire, Northumberland, and Wales, the common people eat barley bread. In the counties of Stafford, Derby, Westmoreland, Cumberland, Northumberland, Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire, a great number of people eat oat bread.

NO one hears with more concern than I do of riots, tumults, and insurrections. My heart bleeds for our infatuated, miserable countrymen; who, having some causes of complaint, and apprehending they should want bread, unhappily have assembled in a riotous manner, to the great detriment of the community, as well as of individuals. Many weighty considerations require that crimes of this dangerous nature and enormity should be punished: government could not otherwise be supported, nor liberty and property

property be secured: all would be anarchy and confusion. But yet as much mercy and compassion should be extended to them, they should be treated with as much lenity and tenderness, as the nature of their guilt, compared with the many circumstances pleading in their favour will admit of: and I firmly hope that the legislative power will soon find out remedies for these convulsions of the state. The stop that the wisdom of the Administration has just now put to the exportation of all sorts of grain, has given inexpressible joy and satisfaction to all ranks of people.

IT were easy to shew the great difference between the prices of things *before* and *since* a tax was laid upon them.

EVERY one sees how a duty of 3s. 4d. upon 56lb. of salt has affected the price of that necessary commodity.

CANDLES were bought at 3d. a pound before a duty was laid upon them; but, at present, they are advanced to 7d. Previous
to

to the laying on this duty, they were made, in general, by housekeepers, though that business is now become a separate trade.

MALT, before an excise was levied upon it, was made by the farmers in general, and such as had not conveniencies, or did not chuse to make it, could exchange a comb of barley for the same measure of malt, without paying any thing in lieu of that exchange, which is now 5s. a comb. This is also become a very lucrative trade to individuals, especially the makers of foreign malt, who pay no duty, but are allowed, by way of bounty and store-room money, 4s. for every quarter of barley made into malt and exported.

A great variety of other articles, though necessaries of life, are subject to heavy imposts, and are consequently, I had almost said, an intolerable burden to the consumers. I could, and may hereafter, propose an easy method of removing this grievance.

THE

THE principal argument offered in favour of the bounty is, that we have grown much greater quantities of corn, and have had it cheaper in general *since* than it was *before* that præmium was granted: the bounty therefore was the cause of these greater quantities and cheapness.

THE premises are granted; but the consequence is denied.

FROM the time of William the First to the reign of Henry the Seventh, wars, either civil or foreign, and conquests, were generally the objects of our thoughts. But Henry was a great prince, and wisely cultivated the arts of peace. Agriculture made some, though a slow, progress from this period to 1688, when, invited by a brave people, who were determined to sacrifice their lives and fortunes rather than be deprived of the natural rights of mankind, William Prince of Orange mounted the English throne. He gloriously defended the liberties

liberties of Europe, gave some check to the rapid progress of the arms of Lewis the Fourteenth, who was aiming at universal monarchy. The liberty of Englishmen, how much soever we may boast of a *Magna Charta*, takes its date from this happy æra. And no sooner were the people of this island sensible that their civil and religious liberties and their properties were secured, but they vied with each other in cultivating their lands, in encouraging trade and commerce, and were seized with an insatiable desire of improving the arts and sciences. From inquiries and experiments, we soon acquired a superior skill in agriculture, which soon enabled us to grow corn in vast abundance. This, and not a bounty of three-pence three farthings a bushel for barley and seven-pence half-penny a bushel for wheat, made every kind of grain cheaper than it was before. Queen Anne pursued the measures of our great Deliverer; reduced the power of France to a very low ebb, and gave all possible encouragement to the whole circle of arts and sciences. In return for this royal patronage,

favour,

favour, and munificence, the learned, of all countries, bestowed upon her reign the epithet of Augustan and Golden Age.

HAPPILY for this kingdom, she was succeeded by a Prince of the illustrious House of Hanover, who was presumptive heir of the Crown of Great-Britain.

STILL enjoying the same privileges under this royal family, so great have been our conquests and acquisitions, so amazingly extensive our trade and commerce, during the reigns of the late King and our present auspicious Monarch, that the most impartial and exact accounts of them will scarcely be credited a century or two hence.

“ IN England,” says a French writer of eminence, “ where the subjects, under protection of law, with safety enjoy tranquility, convenience, and all the fruits of their labour, improvements in the science of agriculture have added greatly to the produce of the land: and as to a foreign market,

“ market, for the surplus of their own consumption, that was easily found.

“ Thine, Freedom! thine the Blessings pictur’d here;

“ Thine are the Charms that dazzle and endear.”

BUT if the bounty is the cause of our growing greater quantities of corn, I shall be glad to learn from the advocates for this measure, how it happens that all parts of the kingdom do not grow greater quantities of corn? that one county in particular, and that none of the largest, has some years exported nine parts out of ten of all the barley that has been shipped for foreign markets, though all counties are entitled alike to this bounty? If they answer, The lands of this county are better than those of any other, then the goodness of the lands, and not the bounty, is the cause of their growing greater quantities of corn. If they say the situation of that county is more convenient for exportation, then the situation, and not the bounty, is the cause, &c. &c.

ALL that I shall add further upon the bounty is this: Would gentlemen have a bounty

bounty given when corn is very dear, or when it is very cheap? It certainly ought not to be given when corn is very dear, because it will enhance the price of what is consumed at home, and bring on a scarcity or famine. It is unnecessary to grant it when corn is very cheap, because the lowness of the price will be a sufficient inducement for foreigners to purchase it. Besides, in general, when the price of grain is low it is the effect of plentiful crops. And I have heard some honest, intelligent farmers own, that they have very often gained more when wheat has been at 28s. per quarter, than when they have received double that money for it; for this obvious reason, that in the former case they had more than twice the quantity of corn they had in the latter.

T H E Proposal for bringing up all cow-calves, ewe-lambs, &c, will effectually reduce the price of butcher's meat to a standard sufficiently low in a little more than one year. It is even now considerably lower than it was six weeks ago. Perhaps to open the
ports

ports for live stock would still operate more powerfully upon the minds of graziers, butchers, &c. And if a bounty was granted of 5s. a head for all cows and bullocks, and 2s. 6d. a head for all calves and lambs, imported from abroad, many of our merchants, whose correspondence is very general and extensive, would soon find out places from which they would be able to furnish us with great numbers of cattle both fat and lean, by which means we should almost immediately be able to buy meat, butter, cheese, &c. at moderate prices. And if the wisdom of parliament should not judge it right to leave our ports always open for the importation of grain, cattle, and all the other necessaries of life ; yet to lodge ‘ a discretionary power
 ‘ with his majesty in council to stop or
 ‘ admit of the exportation of all sorts of
 ‘ grain and all the necessaries of life, and to
 ‘ open the ports for the importation of them
 ‘ from all countries in the known world,’ just as the exigencies of the time shall appear to require, would, in all probability, be attended with most happy consequences to the state.

If

If those great personages, who alone have the power of regulating the affairs of government, should think so favourably of any of the proposals laid before them and the public in these papers, as to consider, improve, and render them of general utility, they will enjoy the high luxury of doing good, and conciliate to themselves the warm affections of a free and brave people.

THE author also, who, for many years, has made agriculture and other branches of knowledge, which he apprehended to be conducive to the true interests of society, the objects of his thoughts and study, will enjoy great pleasure and complacency of mind from the pleasing reflection, that he has employed his time so as to endeavour to be useful to the community of which he has the happiness to be a member.

P I N I S.



